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## N° XV.

*Description of the Grotto at Swatara, by the Rev. PETER MILLER, of Ephrata; communicated by WILLIAM BARTON, Esquire.*

Read March “  
7, 1783.

AS the course of my letter now tends this way, I must remind you, if ever you should publish a natural history of Pennsylvania, not to consign to oblivion that very curious petrifying cavern, of which, lest you should not have seen it already, I shall give some description.

“ It is situate on the east side of Swatara, close to the river. Its entrance is very spacious, and there is somewhat of a descent towards the other extremity; infomuch that I suppose the surface of the river is rather higher than the bottom of the cave. The upper part is like an arched roof, of solid lime-stone rock, perhaps twenty feet thick. On entering, are found many apartments, some of them very high, like the choir of a church. There is, as it were, a continual rain within the cave, for the water drops incessantly from the roof upon the floor; by which, and the water petrifying as it falls, pillars are gradually formed to support the roof. I saw this cave about thirty years ago, and observed above ten such pillars, each six inches in diameter and six feet high; all so ranged that the place inclosed by them resembled a sanctuary in a Roman church: And I can assure you, that no royal throne ever exhibited more grandeur, than the delightful prospect of this *lufus naturæ*. Satisfied with the view of this, we discovered the resemblances of several monuments, incorporated into the walls, as if the bodies of departed heroes were there deposited. Our guide then conducted us to a place, where,  
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he said, hung the bell : This is a piece of stone issuing out of the roof, which when struck sounds like a bell.

“ Some of the stalactites are of a colour like sugar-candy, and others resemble loaf-sugar ; but it is a pity that their beauty is now almost destroyed by the country people. The water, as it falls, runs down the declivity ; and it is both wholesome and pleasant to drink, when it has discharged its petrifying matter. It is remarkable that we found several holes at the bottom of the cave, going down perpendicularly, perhaps into the abyfs, which renders it dangerous to be without a light. At the end of the cave, there is a pretty run, which takes its course through part of it, and then loses itself among the rocks : Here is also its exit, by an aperture which is very narrow. Through this the vapours continually pass outwards, with a strong current of air ; and, at night, these vapours ascending resemble a great furnace. Part of these vapours and fogs appear, on ascending, to be condensed at the head of this great alembic, and the more volatile parts to be carried off, through the aperture communicating with the exterior air before mentioned, by the force of the air in its passage.

“ I beg pardon for having troubled you with such a long detail. It appears strange to me that none of our philosophers have hitherto published a true account of this remarkable grotto.”

## N° XVI.

*An Account of some Experiments on Magnetism, in a Letter to JOHN PAGE, Esquire, at Williamsburg.*

DEAR SIR,

Read Feb.  
6, 1781.

**A** GREEABLE to the promise in my last, I shall now communicate to you some conjectures and experiments on magnetism, which may perhaps  
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